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Sh-h! CIA Cover Hides All But Boss' Unlisted Phone

By MICHAEL MOK

At 11:15 A. M. yesterday, a man in a rumpled seersucker suit darted into an office building at 55 Fifth Ave. His mission: to find out why the supersecret Central Intelligency Agency had used a firm at that address as a cover for its cloak-and-dagger operations.

The name of the firm is the J. M. Kaplan Fund, a private charitable foundation which supports such local good works as Shakespeare-in-the-Park, Save Carnegie Hall and the Henry St. Settlement.

The CIA's cover was blown by Rep. Wright Patman (D.-Tex.), who disclosed the other day that the intelligence agency had funneled money into the fund. The Internal Revenue Service subsequently confirmed that the CIA had given financial support to the foundation.

Middle-Income Spies

"I can see why the CIA would want to infiltrate the Shakespeare festival," said the city editor to the man in the seersucker suit (one of his reporters). "All those cloaks and daggers would kind of blend in with the scenery. Go down and have a look."

When he arrived, the reporter noticed that the Fifth Ave. address was ideally suited to intelligence operations. The ground floor houses a Longchamps restaurant for agents on modest expense accounts, and there is a florist's shop for boy spies who must send flowers to girl spies in the line of duty.

The J. M. Kaplan Fund has offices on the 17th floor. The first thing you come to is a switchboard with a sign over it: DON'T GO HOME ON YOUR COFFEE BREAK. Beyond the switchboard is a large office with two large safes, both of which were yawning open.

Search for a Spokesman

The reporter stated his business and the switchboard girl got busy on the phone, looking for a spokesman.

She tried several numbers without success. "Well, what do you want to do with him?" She finally whispered. The reporter glanced over her shoulder at the switchboard. A calling card was glued to it, which said: "Easthampton: J. M. Kaplan, private line," and gave the unlisted number of the financier who runs the show, for all the world to see.

No Comment, Ditto, Ditto

"How like the CIA," the reporter thought, remembering how U-2 pilot Gary Powers was shot down in Russia with his pockets full of documents. "Keep everything out in the open and no one will ever suspect."

At last the spokesman, a handsome chap, appeared. The reporter said: "To whom am I speaking, sir?"

"No comment," said the spokesman crisply.

"You mean you have no comment on who you are?"

"No comment," he repeated.

"Would you care to say anything about Congressman Patman's allegations concerning the fund's association with the CIA, or the statement from IRS that Central Intelligence did contribute money to the foundation?"

Some Other Time

"I have no comment," said the man ushering out the visitor in the rumpled seersucker suit. "Perhaps on another occasion, when we are involved in some civic battle, I can be of help to you . . ."

The reporter stepped wearily into the elevator, thinking to himself that now that the fund has presumably severed its connection with the CIA, it ought to tighten up its security—perhaps by hiding the boss' phone number.

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